



CALIFORNIA HEALTHY PETS ACT 2007
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Healthier Pets. Safer Communities. Taxpayer Savings.

Every year, over 800,000 pets are abandoned in California. Aggressive stray dogs roam through many neighborhoods, increasing the danger of dog bites and the transmission of diseases. And taxpayers spend \$250 million to house abandoned cats and dogs in shelters and then sadly, euthanize the majority of these pets.

There is a proven approach to solve this problem: mandatory spay/neuter laws. With the wide availability of free and low-cost spay/neuter services, mandatory spay/neuter laws do not pose a financial burden for pet owners. It's a common sense solution to the growing problem of pet overpopulation.

What the California Healthy Pets Act Would Do

The California Healthy Pets Act (AB 1634) would require the spaying and neutering of most cats and dogs by the time the pet is four months old. It is authored and was introduced by Assemblymember Lloyd Levine.

Pet owners who have not spayed or neutered their pet would be cited and given time to spay or neuter their pets before a fine would be assessed.

Local animal control agencies would be responsible for enforcing the California Healthy Pets Act. A portion of the fines collected would be used to expand the availability of free or low-cost spay or neuter programs and other outreach efforts.

The California Healthy Pets Act exempts:

- Purebred dogs and cats whose owners obtain a permit
- Dogs who work as guide dogs, service dogs, or signal dogs
- Dogs who are used by law enforcement agencies for law enforcement or rescue activities
- Dogs and cats whose veterinarian determines that due to age, poor health, or illness it is unsafe to spay or neuter them

Existing Law

State law does not currently prescribe a policy for the spaying and neutering of dogs and cats. In the absence of state law, some California cities and counties have already adopted laws requiring spaying and neutering of cats and dogs. These laws have proven effective.

For example, Santa Cruz County implemented a mandatory spay and neuter law in 1995. Within two years, the county began to see a noticeable

reduction in the number of animals entering its shelters. Within eight years, despite a 15 percent growth in the county's human population, the number of animals entering Santa Cruz County shelters had been cut in half.

Under the California Healthy Pets Act, cities and counties would be permitted to maintain or adopt stronger spay and neuter laws at their discretion.

Benefits of the California Healthy Pets Act

Healthier pets

Medical research shows that spayed or neutered cats and dogs live longer and healthier lives. The American Veterinary Medical Association recommends early spaying and neutering because younger animals recover faster and with less pain.

Spaying and neutering also protects and improves the health of California's pets by reducing or eliminating many health problems that are difficult and expensive to treat, such as cancer, tumors, hernias, infections and other life-threatening diseases.

The California Healthy Pets Act will help Californians become more educated pet owners, which will help improve the health and well-being of their animals. In addition, the bill would increase the number of cats and dogs adopted into permanent homes by reducing the number of diseased cats and dogs that enter shelters and harm otherwise healthy and adoptable pets.

Safer Communities

Mandatory spaying and neutering will reduce the dangers caused by roaming stray animals, the transmission of diseases, and injuries from dog bites. Unaltered dogs are three times more likely to attack humans and other pets.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, California currently has the nation's highest occurrences of dog bites, animal attacks and attack-related fatalities in the nation -- and children are the most common victims.

Taxpayer savings

Nearly one million unwanted and abandoned cats and dogs are born in California every year. Reducing the number of California's unwanted animals will reduce the costs associated with caring for and euthanizing them.

Based on estimates from the City of Los Angeles Department of Animal Services and the California Department of Health Services, California's local governments spend more than \$250 million every year to shelter and/or euthanize unwanted animals. This estimate does not include the capital costs of building new shelters.

According to the Animal Population Control Study Commission, every dollar spent on spay and neuter surgeries saves taxpayers \$18.72 in future animal control costs over a ten-year period.

Supporters

The California Healthy Pets Act was developed by a diverse coalition of veterinarians, animal control officers, government officials, and animal advocates. Supporters include:

- California Veterinary Medical Association
- California State Humane Association
- California Animal Control Directors Association
- Association of Veterinarian for Animal Rights
- City of Los Angeles Department of Animal Services